

The Steve Harrington Guide to Babysitting by UnoriginalToast

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Family, Feels, Fluff, Humor, SO MUCH FLUFF, Steve and his kids

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Lucas Sinclair, Max (Stranger Things), Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Everyone & Everyone, No real pairings - Relationship, Steve & His Kids, Tho steve does mourn his lack of love life

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Summary:

Steve has been tasked with babysitting El after the Gate is closed, which sounds like an easy enough job. After all, she's too tired to be much trouble, right? But what Steve doesn't factor in is the trouble her four nosey friends and that girl with the shitty brother can get themselves into.

A small, few-chaptered fic--possibly soon to be one shot series--of Steve and his 6 middle school aged children. Spoilers for Season 2

1. Chapter 1

The forest glistened in the morning light as Steve stomped through the dull, dead grass and leaves. He was wrapped in a light coat and a scarf and his car was parked just down the road and a little out of sight. He was exhausted still, even a whole two days after that night. But, when Hopper called he knew better than to ignore the police chief's request, so he threw some clothes on, dragged himself out of bed, and drove to the little cabin hidden away in the woods.

It wasn't the first time he'd been there. In fact, for the past two days, he'd gone between Hopper's cabin and Will's house to help clean up. He didn't know why he kept putting himself in places where he'd see Nancy and Jonathan, but he did and it wasn't terrible. Sure, yeah it was weird seeing the girl he broke up with next to her new guy after... what? A week? But there was something else that kept him coming back. He was part of this now. Whatever this was, it was bigger than him and he had to help bring back some semblance of normalcy.

"About time," Hopper's gruff face answered and Steve wondered how El was ever able to figure out if the stern man was joking or upset.

"Sorry, sir. You kinda dragged me out of bed," the boy responded with a nervous laugh and a visible puff of air thanks to the cold.

"Well, you're here now," the man shrugged as he tugged on his coat. "Food's in the fridge, TV's working now, phone is too. I'll let you know before I come home and don't let anyone in before checking the window. No one except me gets in, got it?"

"Uh, yes sir."

"And let me know if she gets up. I'm not thrilled about heading back to work, but we gotta make it look like nothing really happened. We still have to keep her on the down-low."

"Yes, sir."

"Good. She's still sleeping, probably will most of the day. Make sure

she has some water and eats at least one non-Eggo thing, got it?"

Steve wanted to question if he heard Hopper right, but the taller man was already pushing past him and down the wooded path to his car. "Remember!" Hopper continued. "*No one* but me. No. One."

"Okay, okay!" Steve called, giving the man a wave. "Don't worry, she's safe with me!"

Jim stopped and glanced back at the boy, as though evaluating whether or not that statement was true. In the end, he decided it was good enough and turned back down the path without another word.

It was only when the truck had turned on and driven away that Steve let out a breath. Jeeze, what a stick in the mud. El had been basically unconscious for most of the past two days after closing the gate and who in the world was going to find them all the way out here? There was nothing to worry about.

"He's worse than Mrs. Ryder with her precious Alice," Steve muttered jokingly to himself, a memory of the high strung affluent woman popping into his head. Babysitting for her was like babysitting the pope!

But, this would be different. Sure, he would rather spend the whole day in bed, but this was the second best thing. House to himself, a television, fridge full of food... And best of all he was away from Nancy so he could finally relax and not think about his relationship status.

First, he decided to check in on the girl and gently opened the door to her small room. She was there, as expected, still fast asleep on the bed. Her mess of curls flew wildly around her head and her face was still red and warm as it had been for the past few days. But, Hopper insisted she was alright, just tired and exhausted from overexerting herself. Steve still didn't know what to make of El, but he was beyond grateful to her for saving their little town.

Seeing that she was fine, Steve made his way back to the main room and flopped onto the couch, his arms stretching over the backrest. He flipped the TV on by stretching his foot out over to the power button

and then relaxed to the high pitched sounds and cheers of the Price is Right. Yeah, he figured, of all the babysitting jobs in town, this was by far going to be the easiest.

He sat there for about a half hour before he heard the creak of a door. He glanced over, a little startled, and saw El standing in the doorway. She was wearing a long night shirt and looked beyond exhausted as she swayed and leaned on the doorframe.

“Hey, you should be in bed,” Steve said as he stood and made his way to her. She continued to stare at him, looking confused and tired, and Steve felt horrible for her. She probably was wondering where Hopper was.

“Steve?” she asked in a raspy voice, searching his face for answers beyond what she had asked.

“Yeah. I’m watching you and the house. Your, uh...” Dad? Papa? Guardian? “Hopper is back at work. But I’m here. Are you hungry?”

“Work?”

“Yeah, had to go back for your cover, you know? Make it seem like everything’s cool.” He frowned, realizing she hadn’t answered his question. “I can get you some food...”

“Not hungry.” Steve realized she looked a little sad that Hopper wasn’t there and he felt bad for her all over again.

“Okay, well why don’t you go back to bed then? You’re still tired, right?”

“Still tired,” Eleven nodded.

Without another word, Steve ushered her back into the room and got her to lay back down on the bed.

“Alright when you wake up next, you need to eat something,” he told her and she nodded, letting out a comfortable sigh as her head hit the pillow. Steve ruffled her hair and turned to leave. By the time he got to the doorway, she was asleep again.

He went back to watching TV, though he'd missed nearly all of The Price is Right. He picked up the TV Guide to see what else was on but barely got to the actual guide before there was a loud pounding at the door.

He about lept out of his pants, he was so startled by the noise and he began to lunge forward, but then stopped himself. Hopper made it clear that no one, not one single person besides him was supposed to step foot in this house. Well, then what was Steve supposed to do? He was pretty sure his nailed up bat was back at Will's house and he didn't know if he had enough time to fund a gun in this mess of a house. So, he picked up the end table and hoped it would work.

The loud knocking on the door continued as Steve made his way to the door, the legs of the end table sticking out. He got closer and closer to the door and was just reaching towards the handle when the person on the other side spoke.

"Come on, Hopper, I know you're in there! You promised me you'd let me see her!"

Steve dropped the end table with a loud clang and flung the door open.

"Wheeler, what the fuck are you doing here?"

Before him stood Mike who he once would have immediately described as 'Nancy's little brother' but was now 'one of the kids I took to fight dangerous monsters in an alternate dimension thing a few nights ago.' He looked shocked for a moment and then grinned sheepishly at the older boy. For Mike, he had no idea what was going on with his sister and her boyfriend... or ex-boyfriend, but he thought Steve was pretty cool.

"Hopper said I could see El but he didn't say when, he just said soon, and I thought that was bullshit so I decided to come here and see her myself," Mike rambled out in one long sentence. He took another deep breath. "What the hell are you doing here?"

"Babysitting," Steve replied shortly, though he did feel bad that Mike hadn't gotten to see his friend in two days. "Go home, Mike."

“No, I want to see her.”

“She’s asleep.”

“Then I want to see her sleep!”

“Dude. Creepy.”

Mike turned bright red and Steve stifled a laugh. He knew though, from the determination in Mike’s eyes, that he wasn’t going to get him out anytime soon. Groaning as he stepped aside, Steve gestured to the inside of the cabin. Mike looked surprised and then beyond grateful.

“Fine, but you’re out in an hour. If Hopper finds out I let someone in, he’ll string me up by my toes and kill me.”

Mike just shrugged indifferently at the prospect of an angry Hopper murdering Steve, but he decided not to chance his luck with a smart ass comment, so he hurried inside.

Steve just stood there for another moment with the door wide open as he watched Mike make his way to Eleven’s bedroom. Well, he thought, this job just got a whole lot harder.

Notes for the Chapter:

So I know I said I didn't have time for this, but then I was like you know what, screw it I'm doing this. So here's the Steve Babysitting fic no one asked for but I had to write.

2. Chapter 2

“Alright, you’ve seen her, she’s alive, now get out.”

“No!”

Mike was sitting at El’s bedside and Steve was in the doorway, his arms folded and a deep frown on his lips. To be completely honest, he didn’t care what the kid did, but he would be damned before he let Hopper shoot him for not following a simple request.

“I mean it, Wheeler, get out.”

“I haven’t seen her in a year, Steve!” Mike whirled around and shot a pointed glare at Steve. The older kid furrowed his brows in shock at the anger that was radiating from Mike’s eyes. This was not the generally quiet, kind of nerdy kid brother anymore and Steve suddenly found himself confronted with how much Mike had grown up in just the past year. Hell, it looked like the past week had aged him years.

“Mike--”

“No, I know Hopper’s at work, so just let me stay here a little longer. Please? Just til she wakes up?”

“I don’t think--”

“Come on, Steve!” Mike balled his fists. “What if this was Nancy?!”

Steve stopped short and stared at Mike, who looked back at the taller boy and bit his lip. He’d gone too far. He could tell just by the myriad of emotions that flashed onto Steve’s face in just a few short seconds. Anger at Mike for daring to ask that. Sadness at having the wound of breaking up with Nancy ripped open. And, there was even a little bit of him that was impressed that Mike would even think to go that far.

“You know Nancy and I broke up,” Steve said quietly, his voice hollow.

“Yeah, but you still care about her.”

Steve paused and looked away, glancing at a window that was boarded up. The whole house seemed so dark, so empty. He wondered what it had been like for El to be stuck here for nearly a year, never leaving. Perhaps Hopper realized that was wrong and that's why Steve had been asked to babysit. Maybe the man would loosen some of his rules. But, that wasn't for Steve to decide or judge. He was just there to do his job.

Steve looked at the ceiling for a long moment, then sighed, then looked to Mike. "Fine. But the next time I tell you to go, you get your ass outta here, got it?"

Mike's face brightened and he agreed enthusiastically. Steve felt better too. Man, babysitting would be so easy if all he had to do was say yes to a couple kids. They ate that word up like candy the day after Halloween.

Steve turned his back to Mike and started walking towards the kitchen. He was about to ask if the kid was hungry when there was another pounding on the door. Steve jumped and grabbed the first thing he could--a broom--and held it out in front of him. "Close the door," he whispered pointedly to Mike who was staring back at him with wide eyes. The boy wasn't about to question the babysitter, especially not after being granted a major concession, so he did as he was told.

Steve slowly walked towards the door and began to pull it open, slowly at first before he flung it into the adjacent wall. He shoved the broom forward and was ready to attack.

And that was when he realized it was Dustin standing there, his hand over his chest and his mouth open in a scream that didn't quite escape his lips.

"What the shit, Steve?!" Dustin cried.

"What the *fuck* are you doing here?!" Steve shouted in as an answer.

"What the fuck are *you* doing here?!"

Steve groaned as he slapped the palm of his hand against his

forehead and sighed into his wrist. Why, oh why, couldn't his life be normal for one stupid day? Just one! Was that too much to ask?

"I'm watching El! And watch the language!"

It was then, after hearing the shouting and the familiar voices, that Mike appeared beside Steve. "Hi Dustin," he said nonchalantly, as though meeting up at an old cabin in the woods was the most normal thing in the world. "What are you doing here?"

"You didn't answer when I paged you," Dustin replied with a shrug. "I figured you'd be here. Did Hop let you see El?"

Mike opened his mouth to answer, but Steve spoke first. "No, and neither of you should be here right now! The only person who's supposed to be in this crappy place is me."

"How's El doing?"

"She's okay," Mike answered, both boys ignoring Steve's comments. "She's still asleep, but I bet she'll wake up soon."

"Cool, what do you want to do until then?" Dustin asked as he took a step inside the house. Steve reached out and pushed him lightly back outside.

"Oh no, you're not staying here. Hopper told me no one gets in the cabin except him."

"But Mike's in the cabin," Dustin reasoned. "Come on, Steve, haven't we been through enough already? Must we be separated again and again and again? It's been a long week, man. Let's just watch TV and hang out. You know, like friends. Don't we deserve that? Huh? After all we've been through, don't we deserve a little fun?"

God, that kid was dramatic. Steve narrowed his eyes and pursed his lips but of all the kids in the world, he absolutely couldn't say no to Dustin. He was like a brother to him. A mini-Steve and, though he liked to push his luck, the boy looked up to him. And besides, Hopper went to work, not the store or something. Steve was sure he'd be able to get the boys out of the house before Hopper came home.

“Fine,” the teen groaned as he stepped aside. Dustin smirked, knowing his little dramatic flair would help. He and Mike high fived and Mike went back to El’s room.

“Oh!” Dustin turned on his heel and looked over at Steve. “Lucas is gonna be here in like ten minutes.”

“What?!”

Notes for the Chapter:

Poor Steve, his little ducklings are filtering in lol! Thank you guys for all the love! It's much appreciated! To get this kind of response on a short little story like this is exciting and I'm thrilled! This isn't an epic or a really long story, so the chapters will be short. Hopefully, that also means they'll come quickly! Anyway, I hope you keep on enjoying!

3. Chapter 3

"Yeah, so do you have any popcorn or something?"

Dustin looked back at Steve innocently, like he hadn't just barged into this cabin in the middle of nowhere, completely unannounced, and totally uninvited. The older boy found himself with his eyes narrowed and his mouth opened and even he was unsure if yelling or gasping would be more appropriate. But then Dustin smiled back at him with that adorable smile where his lips covered his teeth and Steve knew he couldn't bring himself to yell. Besides, he figured, if most of the kids were here now, that meant they weren't out somewhere else causing trouble.

"I don't know," he sighed, pointing towards the kitchen. "Why don't you go look for yourself?"

Dustin grinned again, knowing that the suggestion was also an affirmation of his being there. He'd broken Steve down to allowing this and he was thrilled. Steve, meanwhile, paced the living room, trying to think about how he was going to get these kids out of the damn house before Hopper came back.

It was then that the door swung open and Lucas came in with Max in tow. Steve whirled around and pointed a finger at the kids who stopped short as he started to say, "No. No, no no! What did you say? *Lucas* was coming over." Dustin appeared in the doorway of the kitchen and shrugged. Lucas frowned.

"Oh, stop freaking out! It's a *party* meeting," Dustin replied. "So now the whole party is here. Well, except Will, but I don't think his Mom's gonna let him outta the house anytime soon."

"Yeah, come on Steve," Max pleaded. "You can't seriously expect me to sit out a party in the woods, can you?"

"Yes, I can," he said and opened his mouth to say more, but the door to El's room opened. Eleven and Mike stepped out, El looking better than before, and Mike looking surprised to see an additional two people in the cabin.

"Hey, guys," Mike waved.

"Hey!" Max and Lucas responded.

"Party?" El asked quietly, glancing at Steve, who looked both agitated and defeated, Lucas and Max who were walking towards the couch, and Dustin who had appeared with a bowl of popcorn.

"Yeah!" Dustin replied with a large smile.

"No!" Steve shouted right after, causing all the kids to look at him. "Listen here, you little shits, this isn't a party! I was hired to babysit one kid. *One*. And a sick kid at that!"

"Not sick!" El called, her lips pursed in a pout.

"Sick enough. Anyway, that's not the point. The point is, I need all of you to get the hell out before Chief Hopper comes home and skins me alive!"

"Aww, come on Steve," Lucas whined as he flopped on the couch. "Chief's a softie deep down. You'll be fine!"

"And he's at work," Mike added. "So we'll be out by the time he gets home."

"Five-one-five," El chimed in.

"Right." Mike nodded. "So we'll leave at four. Isn't that plenty of time?"

Steve glanced around at the kids who peered back at him with hopeful eyes. He looked back at El who had more color in her cheeks and looked all around happier at seeing all her friends in the small cabin, and Steve knew she needed this. He didn't know why Hopper had kept her here for a year, but he figured if nothing else, she deserved a reward for, you know, *saving the entire world*. That, and it was five against one, so there was no winning here.

"*Fine*," Steve spat out, as though he was completely dejected about the situation. "But when I say leave, you get out, got it?" The kids cheered, happy that they'd gotten their way. Steve just sighed and

realized that since El was awake, he needed to call Hopper. "I gotta call the Chief and let him know El's okay," he said. "You guys keep quiet. If I hear one little peep, I'll beat the shit outta you, got it?"

"Got it!" The kids called out in unison as Steve went to the phone and dialed the number for the police station.

"Hi, Chief Hopper, please," He said, twirling the phone cord around his finger anxiously. As he was redirected, he glanced over at the kids silently sorting movies out by the television. You know, when they were nice and quiet, they weren't that bad.

"Hopper." The voice startled Steve and he jumped a little at hearing the man's deep voice over the crackling phone line.

"Hi, sir. Uh, this is Steve," he said timidly, praying the kids wouldn't hear him sound so small and unintimidating.

"Oh. Hey kid," Jim replied gruffly. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah, yeah. Everything's okay. Great! Everything's great! I mean, good. Probably just good. Um..." He paused to take a breath. "El woke up. You said you wanted me to let you know when she did."

The mention of the girl kept Hopper from questioning the jumpiness in Steve's voice. "Oh, she did. Is she good? Has she eaten?"

Steve glanced over to see her eating some popcorn. "Yeah." Technically not a lie. "And yeah she's doing really good. She seems pretty well."

"Not eating more Eggos I hope."

"No, sir." Also technically not a lie.

"Good. Look, I gotta go. I'll be home by five fifteen, okay? Thanks for doing this, you're a real stand-up kid."

"No problem sir, happy to help."

The line went dead and he hung up the phone. He turned back to the kids who were looking back at him and sighed, crossing his arms.

They were going to be the death of him for sure. But, he could enjoy his time with them before they sent him to an early grave.

"Alright, twerps, get the player ready." He marched over to the television and grabbed a tape. "And *I'm* picking the movie."

They arranged themselves on the one small couch, El, Mike, and Dustin, squeezing on the small sofa with Steve sitting on the ground, his back against the base of the couch, and Max and Lucas on either side of him.

And then there was a knock on the door.

"For the love of... Who the fuck is it now?" Steve asked irritably. Dustin hopped up and went to the door, throwing it open before Steve could tell him to at least look out the window first.

And there was Will, standing there looking as though nothing absolutely and completely *awful* had happened to him in the past two days. Nope, he looked perfectly cheery with his hand gripping his backpack and a smile on his face.

"Hi, guys!"

Six kids, including a girl with psychic powers, a boy who was possessed two days ago, and a kid who's brother literally tried to kill him all in one cabin after being under strict orders not to let anyone else in? Yeah, Steve knew it was going to be his last day on earth.

Notes for the Chapter:

And then there were six....

Hope you guys are still enjoying! This isn't meant to be anything long or deep--just a shallow little self-indulgent mini fic--so sorry for the shortness! If you want longer, deeper stories (mostly centered around El and Hopper), check out my other fic, *And the World is Still* for cute oneshots! Thanks again for all the love! I truly appreciate it!

4. Chapter 4

"Will!" Dustin threw his hands in the air in surprise. "Hey, buddy! How'd you get outta the house?"

Steve was standing and took a deep breath when he saw the last member of the party in the doorway. He pinched his nose between his thumb and forefinger and exhaled again. Things were going to be fine, it was alright. He just had one psychic, a formerly possessed kid, three little shits, and a girl whose brother beat the shit out of him the night before. Oh, and also none of them were even supposed to be anywhere near the house under strict orders of the Police Chief who probably had about five different guns he could use to shoot Steven when he finds out about this.

"Mom's working a double," Will said happily as he shrugged off his coat. "And Jonathan's off with Nancy, so he told me I could do whatever. I got Lucas's message on the walkie-talkie that there's a party at El's, so I figured I'd come on over!"

He walked in and was greeted with a high five from Dustin, a thumbs up from Lucas, and a short bro hug from Mike. He glanced up at Steve and smiled warily before glancing over at his friends. "So, uh, are we gonna watch movies or what?"

Steve wanted to kick them all out, make them all go away, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. They all seemed so happy, reunited now after the hell they'd gone through. It was a miracle one of the kids weren't dead, especially Will and Eleven, who fought harder than anyone.

"Yeah, yeah, go press play," Steve said with a huff as he sat back down on the floor. Will sat next to Steve and Lucas shifted over to Max. Great, now the older teen had to watch out for those two little shits while also watching the other little shits above him on the couch. But, as he glanced behind him to check on Mike and El, he saw that the girl was just resting her head innocently on Mike's shoulder. And, as he turned forward, Max was doing the same on Lucas's shoulder. The poor kids were probably all still exhausted.

When the first movie was over, Steve got up and went to refill the popcorn bowl. "Start the next one without me and I'll kick your ass," he warned the kids as he marched off to the kitchen, but a smile on his lips gave away the fact that he was softening up and didn't really mean it. As the popcorn was popping in the microwave, Dustin came over and stood by him. The boy glanced at Steve and copied the way he was leaning on the counter, his arms folded and one leg crossed in front of the other at the ankle. Steve noticed this and looked at Dustin with a raised eyebrow, trying to hide the fact that he was flattered.

"Hey, uh, can I ask you a question?" Dustin asked, glancing at the ground.

"Sure," Steve shrugged indifferently.

"Cool, thanks, I uh. Well you know, I'm a little nervous. The, uh. The Snow Ball is coming up," Dustin's face turned red and he coughed. "You know, the dance."

Steve gave him a look. "What, you trying to ask me out?" He asked with a chuckle and was amused when Dustin's face turned even redder.

"What? No! Come on!" the boy cried. "I just wanted to know, well. You know. How you do it?"

"How I do what?"

"Get dates."

Oh. Now Steve felt almost bad for that joke at the kid's expense. "You know, in case you haven't noticed, I'm not doing well in the romance department," Steve replied dryly with a hint of regret. But, Dustin just shrugged.

"Yeah right now, but you're *Steve Harrington*! You'll get another date soon enough!" Steve looked over at him, a smile on his lips. Goddamn that kid, stroking his ego and building him up. This was going to make it harder for him to say no in the future.

"Alright," he said, flattered, "Well, girls are a tricky bunch, you know?"

Sometimes they're hot and sometimes they're cold. They're like... the sky." Shit, he was really bad at the whole explaining thing. He was more of a doer rather than a teller.

"The sky?"

"Yeah, you know. Uh, like how the sun is hot and then it goes down and the moon is cold."

"Ohhhh!"

Thank God the kid thought the world of him. "Anyway, you just have to go for it, you know? Just go right up to them and offer your hand and be like, 'hey, I know you want to dance with me. Let's go.' Girls dig confidence."

"Confidence got it. Okay, you think that'll get me a date?"

"It'll at least get you a dance." The microwave dinged and Steve took the bag out.

"A kiss?"

"Don't get ahead of yourself," he warned with a laugh as he poured the popcorn into the bowl.

"Got it. Hey, thanks, man."

Steve glanced over and smiled. He reached his hand out to touch Dustin's curly hair and ruffled it kindly like a big brother would. "Anything for you kid."

He was halfway back to the couch when there was a knock on the door. "What, did you invite every kid in the whole goddamn town over here?" He asked the kids, but they all just shrugged. They had no idea who could be at the door now-they were all accounted for.

Steve went to the window first, though he didn't know how he'd react if a demodog or man in a lab coat was standing there. He'd probably just grab his bat and tell them to get out and hope that worked because *damn* was he tired. How was it that watching movies got him this exhausted? Or maybe it was the stress.

But, what was standing on the doorstep was worse than a demodog or scary lab coat man. Steve had half a mind to take that nailed bat to himself or run off into the woods. But, the kids were looking at him curiously and another knock pounded on the door and he knew he had no way out of this.

So, he pulled open the door and let Jonathan and Nancy inside.

Notes for the Chapter:

The gang's all here! :) Anyway, hope you guys are still enjoying, THANK YOU for all the kind and wonderful reviews and comments. It's so appreciated! I think next chapter will be my last for this story unless it gets to be too long, then I'll split it up. Thanks again so much!

5. Chapter 5

"What the hell are the two of you doing here?" Steve asked for what felt like the twelfth time that day. He had his hand on his face and a defeated sigh on his lips. First, a bunch of kids come over when he was explicitly told not to let anyone come in and now his ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend are here? What a day!

"Gee Steve, nice to see you *too*," Nancy pointedly shot back with a glare. "*I'm* doing well, thanks. Why *yes*, it *is* cold outside."

"Oh cut it out, Nance, you know it's weird as hell for the two of you to show up at a cabin in the middle of nowhere," Steve replied, his own eyes narrowing to match her glare.

Nancy opened her mouth to say something, but Jonathan stepped in before the comment could leave her lips. "We're just here to pick up our brothers." Steve regarded him for a moment but decided to step aside to where the now pouting kids were gathered.

"Come on, Nancy, I just got here," Mike whined, a defeated look on his face.

"Can it, Mike, you know you're not supposed to be here," Nancy shot back with a roll of her eyes. "Now come on before Chief Hopper comes home and kills us all."

"Hopper is a reasonable man," Lucas said weakly, as though he didn't actually believe the words coming out of his mouth. "I mean, I'm sure he'd be pretty cool about... Everything." He glanced at Eleven and then back at the group who did not seem to agree with a word he just said. "Yeah, we're dead if he finds us here."

"Then how about all of you get the hell out," Steve shot back as he turned to face the group of kids gathered by the couch. He felt bad kicking them out of the cabin, especially because El seemed to have livened up by them being here. But, he also was happy not being dead meat. "Because from what I understand, it's pretty illegal to kill a bunch of kids, but I'm sure Hopper will have no problem killing me."

"That depends. Is there a reason for me to kill you?"

Everyone jumped at the additional voice and turned, stunned and scared, to see Chief Jim Hopper standing in the doorway of the old cabin. He had one eyebrow raised and his mouth was formed in a thin, neutral line. There wasn't a peep to be heard in the whole house, probably in all of Hawkins for that matter. Everyone was stunned into silence, afraid that their next words would be their last.

Except, of course, for Dustin, who whispered out a "Holy shit," much louder than he likely meant to.

"Holy shit indeed, kid," Hopper replied, glancing between the kids crowding around the couch, to the teenagers standing in the kitchen, to Steve who looked like he was going to either cry or turn into dust and float away.

"I-I'm... This isn't what it looks like Chief, uh Sir. Sir Chief," stammered Steve.

"Oh, really?" He asked and opened his mouth to say more, but El had hurried over and had wrapped her short arms around his waist. He glanced down at her, eyes shining with the love of a father, and for a moment found himself happy beyond words that she was awake and alright. "Hey, kid. Feeling better?"

El looked up at him and smiled, lopsided and untamed curls bouncing up and down as she nodded her head. "Better," she confirmed. She stepped away and gestured to all of the people in her house. "My friends came."

"Yes," Hopper said, following her gaze. "Which they weren't really supposed to do." He glanced at Steve, who felt an icy dagger go through his heart. "I hope they didn't overwhelm you."

"No," El replied fervently. "No, they made me better."

"Oh?"

Steve swallowed thickly and opened his mouth. "I'm so sorry, sir, the kids, they just kinda came. And they kept coming and coming and I was trying to get them to leave. I know you said no visitors, but it...

but they really seemed to help. El was up all day feeling just fine. I think--if I may, sir--I think they helped."

"Huh." Hopper flattened his lips and bit the insides with his teeth. He looked at the kids again, and then back to the teenagers, and then back to Steve. "That's quite a spin, Harrington."

Steve opened his mouth again and then closed it, not quite sure how to respond to that. He didn't know if Hopper was regarding him favorably or not, but there was no malice in the older man's tone, so there was still hope.

"Chief Hopper," Nancy said, stepping forward. "I'm so sorry for intruding, I was just picking up Mike. But, from what Mike tells me, El had a great time today. I think the kids really needed this chance to get together. You know, they haven't been together since... Well, you know. I think they needed this." The words bubbled out through her lips and then she immediately bit down on her bottom lip. She peered up at the Chief, wondering if that was enough.

Hopper considered this for a moment, and then his eyes softened and his face relaxed and he pulled El into a big hug. All was well.

"Yeah, yeah," he laughed as the whole room untensed and breathed a sigh of relief. "I don't know, Harrington, but you've managed to be both the best and worst babysitter I've ever known."

"Uh, thanks, sir. I think."

"Alright, anyway, it's getting late, so get out of my house," Jim continued and the kids just nodded glad to have their lives spared. Nancy and Jonathan took Mike and Will and Dustin also bummed a ride with them, and Lucas took Max home on his bike.

Steve grabbed his backpack, said goodbye to El who had parked herself on the couch again and walked towards the kitchen and front door. Hopper leaned against the wall, watching him and Steve still felt a little nervous.

"I'm, uh, I'm still really sorry, sir. I didn't mean to... you know, let all the kids in."

"So you just wanted to let a few in?" asked Hopper, though he immediately felt a little bad seeing the surprise and fear hit Steve's eyes at the question. "I'm kidding, kid. It's fine. I was being a little overprotective, and seeing how happy it made the kid, I'm glad her friends were able to come over."

Steve relaxed and smiled back. "Yeah, she really did enjoy it. So, um..." he shifted nervously once again. "Uh, about you know, working for you..."

"Oh." Hopper laughed. "Nah, I'm not gonna pay you."

"I'm really sorry about letting the kids in and-"

"Oh, no. I wasn't planning on paying ya anyway."

"Oh." Steve paused and felt a little insulted that Hopper had planned on using him for free labor, but also relieved that his mess up wouldn't have affected his pay. It was a weird feeling and, frankly, it had been a weird day, so Steve figured he'd just call it a night. "Alrighty, then, night Chief."

Hopper moved and reached into his pocket, pulling out a crisp green bill and handing it to Steve. The boy, though surprised, smiled and tucked it into his palm. "Thanks, sir. I really appreciate your..." He glanced at the bill. "Uh. Dollar."

"Yeah, it's all I got. Now, get outta my house."

And so Steve headed out to his car, glad to have made it through the day alive, and, though he wouldn't admit it, glad he got the chance to see the kids here. Together, not beating up creepy older brothers or fighting monsters. Just hanging out, watching some movies and being kids. He hoped, as he started his car and drove down the deserted Indian streets, that there would be far more of these kinds of days to come.

Notes for the Chapter:

It's here, it's finally here!!! I'm so sorry for how long this took, I really am. I had the most ridiculous week at work and then the Holiday season just came up

and I've barely stopped. I'm SO sorry, but I hope the end is worth it! I'm marking this complete, but I may build more oneshots off of this story and add them, so please shoot me requests if you have ideas.

Thanks for hanging with me, I really appreciate it. I'm so sorry again! Enjoy!

Author's Note:

So I know I said I didn't have time for this, but then I was like you know what, screw it I'm doing this. So here's the Steve Babysitting fic no one asked for but I had to write.